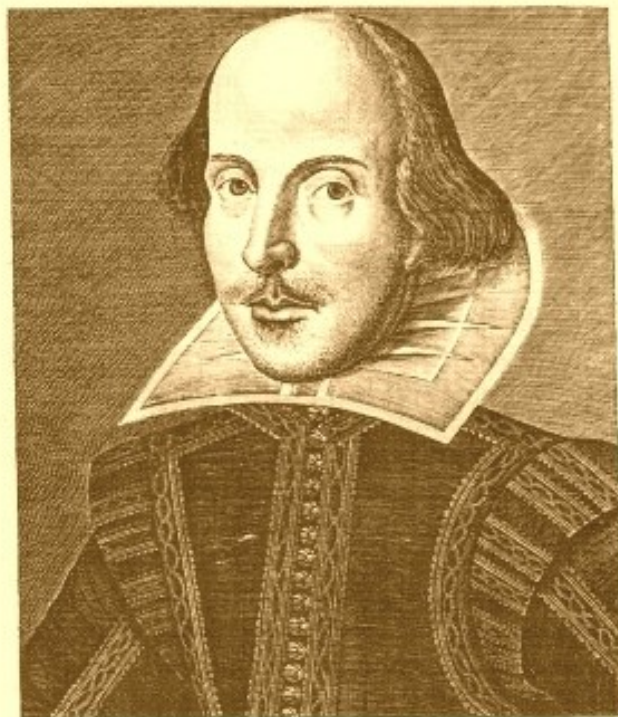


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to Modern English - for contemporary
readers and performers

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Shakespeare For White Trash: Antony and Cleopatra

Classic literature translated into Modern English by Crad Kilodney

October 7, 2010 – Author’s Note:

“Shakespeare For White Trash” is a series of condensed rewrites designed to make Shakespeare understandable and enjoyable to those who have little or no knowledge of him. The plots and characters are unchanged, but everything else has been radically restyled. Read my versions and you’ll be a Shakespeare fan forever!

These plays are intended to be performed, as well as read.

Main Characters

The Triumvirs of the Second Triumvirate (Co-rulers of Rome):

Mark Antony — ruler of the eastern part of the empire

Octavius Caesar — ruler of the western part of the empire, including the city of Rome. (He is also known as Octavian but is usually referred to as Caesar — not to be confused with Julius Caesar, who was his uncle. After the events in this play, Octavius ruled under the name Augustus Caesar. He was the first actual Emperor of the Roman Empire.)

Lepidus — the weakest of the Triumvirs, given only Hispania and Africa to govern

Also:

Cleopatra — Queen of Egypt

Pompey — adversary of Rome (This is Sextus Pompeius, the son of the Pompey who was defeated by Julius Caesar.)

Characters associated with Mark Antony:

Enobarbus — soldier and close friend

Ventidius — general

Canidius — general

Eros — attendant

Scarus — soldier

Silius — soldier

Decretas — soldier (spelling varies in some texts)

Demetrius — soldier

Philo — soldier

Emissary (referred to in other texts as Ambassador)

Soothsayer

Characters associated with Caesar:

Octavia — his sister (actually half-sister; a widow)

Agrippa — general

Dolabella — attendant

Maecenas — officer

Proculeius — soldier

Taurus — general

Thidias — friend (in some texts called Thyreus)

Gallus — friend

Characters associated with Cleopatra:

Iras — female attendant

Charmian — female attendant

Alexas — male attendant

Mardian — male attendant (in the original play, a eunuch)

Seleucus — treasurer

Diomedes — attendant

Farmer

(The Clown is deleted)

Characters associated with Pompey:

Menecrates — friend and pirate

Menas — friend and pirate

Varrius — officer

Gist of the story: The events in *Antony and Cleopatra* take place from 40 B.C. to 30 B.C. and are mostly, but not entirely, historically accurate. Mark Antony has fallen in love with Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt. This causes a rift between him and Octavius Caesar, who feels Antony is neglecting his duties. Antony is forced to return to Rome because of a rebellion by his wife (now dead) and the threat of war with Pompey. Antony and Caesar are reconciled when Antony agrees to marry Caesar's sister, Octavia. The Triumvirs meet with Pompey and make peace (temporarily). Antony abandons Octavia and returns to Cleopatra. Caesar, now convinced of Antony's disloyalty, makes war against him (after wiping out Pompey). Cleopatra is Antony's ally but proves to be unreliable. Caesar defeats Antony's forces. Antony believes Cleopatra has sold him out. She flees to her tombs, fearing for her life, and sends him a false message that she has killed herself. He attempts to kill himself, but he lives long enough to be brought to her. After he dies, she commits suicide by means of a snake bite. (We met the Triumvirs — Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus — in *Julius Caesar*, and it is interesting to compare them in the two plays. In *Julius Caesar*, Antony was the predominant heroic character — strong, courageous, very emotional, and motivated by a fierce loyalty to Julius Caesar. Octavius was young, but very mature for his age, and strong-willed. Lepidus was a weak figure compared to the others. He just happened to be in the right place at the right time to become the third Triumvir, but it was obvious that he was going to get pushed aside at some point by Octavius. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, we find an Antony in moral decline. He is still brave and strong, but his motivations are his obsessive love for Cleopatra and his extreme pride concerning his position in the world. His judgment has become unsound. Reason has given way to emotion. We can still identify with him, but not as much as we did in *Julius Caesar*. Octavius has emerged as the true heir to Julius Caesar. He was born to rule, and he knows it. He is a cooler, more calculating personality — always serious. He is a power player. We could call him “Machiavellian” — not an outright villain, but always putting his own interests first. Lepidus is still a feeble character, and we are not surprised when he is stripped of his power and thrown in prison. As for Cleopatra, she is considered to be Shakespeare's greatest female character. But you may not be entirely sure how you feel about her. We see her weaknesses early on and her strengths at the end.)

Overture. *Some suitable sandal epic music. A round girl, dressed in Egyptian style, walks across the stage holding a sign: “Alexandria, Egypt. 40 B.C.”*

Act 1, Scene 1. *Cleopatra's palace in Alexandria. Demetrius and Philo come in. Philo takes Demetrius by the arm, glances back over his shoulder, and speaks to him in a confidential tone.*

Philo: The old general isn't the same any more. The hero of Philippi. Now look what he's become—Cleopatra's lap dog.

Demetrius: Tell me about it.

(A trumpet flourish announces Antony and Cleopatra.)

Philo: Here they come.

(Antony and Cleopatra come in. She has a party of Attendants fanning her.)

Cleopatra: But how much do you love me? Tell me.

Antony: My love for you can't be measured.

Cleopatra: Oh, don't be evasive. Tell me how far it would reach. As far as the moon?

Antony: Yes, yes. Even further.

Cleopatra: That's not far enough.

Antony: To the stars, then.—Beyond the stars.

Cleopatra: Ooh!—I will want to see for myself.

Antony: Tonight.—We'll look at the stars tonight.

(A Messenger comes in.)

Messenger: A message from Rome, my lord.

Antony: I don't want it! I'm tired of messages from Rome!

Cleopatra: But you should read it. Perhaps your wife, Fulvia, wants you. Or perhaps Caesar has orders for you.

Antony: To hell with Caesar, and to hell with Rome. This is where I intend to stay—with you, my love.—We should be together—permanently—don't you think? After all, we are the two most important people in the world.

Cleopatra: Yes, of course, we are.—Except that you're married to Fulvia.

Antony: Oh, stop it. I don't want to hear another word about Fulvia.—Come now, don't let's quarrel. I want every moment we spend together to be happy. What shall we do tonight?

Cleopatra: Confer with the ambassadors?

Antony: Stop teasing me.—I'm mad about you, don't you know that? Everything you do, everything you say—all your changing moods—it just makes me love you more.—I know what we'll do. We'll disguise ourselves as peasants and walk around the city. We'll listen in on what everyone's saying. Won't that be fun?

Cleopatra: As long as they're talking about me.

(Antony and Cleopatra and her party walk out leisurely.)

Demetrius: He doesn't think much of Caesar, does he?

Philo: I told you. He's not the same Antony he used to be.

Demetrius: That's what they're saying back in Rome. And I'm sure it's gotten back to Caesar.

Philo: Mmm.

Demetrius: Well, let's just hope things get better.

(Demetrius and Philo leave, and the Messenger follows them out.)

Act 1, Scene 2. *In Cleopatra's palace. Enobarbus, a Soothsayer, Charmian, Iras, and Alexas come in.*

Charmian: Alexas, can I ask him?

Alexas: Ask who what?

Charmian: The soothsayer. Can I ask him to tell my fortune?

Alexas: It's up to him.

(Charmian presents her palm to the Soothsayer.)

Charmian: Tell me my fortune, please. And I want it to be good.

Soothsayer: I can't make the future. I can only see it.

Charmian: All right, then. Tell me what you see.

Soothsayer (Reading her palm): Your past is better than your future. But you will outlive the Queen.

Charmian: Oh! Than I shall live a very long time, won't I? And how many children will I have? How many boys and how many girls?

Soothsayer (Reading her palm): It's too early to tell them apart.

Charmian (Pulling her hand away): Oh, you faker.

Iras (Presenting her palm): Now tell me mine!

Alexas (To Enobarbus): This'll never stop. They'll be streaming in from all over the country, just you watch.

Enobarbus: I already know my future. I'm getting drunk tonight.

Charmian (To the Soothsayer): Don't give her anything too good. It'll go to her head.

Soothsayer (Looking at Iras's palm): Your fortunes will be the same.

Iras: The same? Oh, that's a disappointment.

Charmian: Alexas, let him do yours.

Alexas: No, thanks—not with the two of you around.

(Cleopatra comes in.)

Cleopatra: Where's Antony?

Enobarbus: I don't know, madam.

Cleopatra: He was in a good mood before, but now he's grumbling about Rome. I don't like it when his mood changes like that.

Alexas: Here he comes now, madam.

(Antony comes in with the previous Messenger, but Cleopatra starts to leave.)

Cleopatra: Never mind.—Him and his moods.—Hmph!—Come, everyone.

(Everyone else leaves with her, and their exit overlaps Antony's entrance. He is now with the Messenger.)

Messenger: Your wife, Fulvia, was going to attack with her army against your brother, Lucius. But then Caesar moved against both of them and drove them out of Italy.

Antony: And what else?

Messenger (Hesitating): There's worse news, I'm afraid. Please don't blame me for it.

Antony: I don't punish messengers who bring me bad news. Just give it to me straight.

Messenger: Labienus and the Parthians have conquered all of Asia. They've gone all the way to the Euphrates River. They've taken Syria, Lydia, and Ionia—and while all that's happening—

Antony: And while all that's happening, Antony is having a good time in Alexandria with the Queen of Egypt.

Messenger: I didn't say that, sir.

Antony: You didn't have to say it. I can hear them saying it in Rome. I can imagine what they're saying. And I can imagine what sort of names they're calling the Queen of Egypt. I can guess what Fulvia calls her.—Never mind. You can go.

(The First Messenger leaves. The Second Messenger arrives as the First is leaving.)

Antony: Do you have any news from Greece? Anything about my wife?

Second Messenger: My lord—your wife, Fulvia—is dead.

Antony: What happened?

Second Messenger: She died in Greece, my lord. An illness. *(He hands Antony a letter.)* The letter explains it.—And there are other matters.

Antony: All right. Leave me.

(The Second Messenger leaves. Antony reads the letter.)

Antony: Now that she's gone, I wish I had her back.—Damn.—I've been wasting time. I'm going to have to leave. *(Calling)* Enobarbus!

(Enobarbus comes in.)

Enobarbus: Yes, my lord.

Antony: I have to leave. Back to Rome.

Enobarbus: Tsk!—Cleopatra won't like that. She'll insist on dying—several times—just to spite you.

Antony: The Queen of Egypt has an over-developed sense of drama.

Enobarbus: That's why we love her.

Antony: I never should have met her.

Enobarbus: But then think of what you would have missed.

Antony: Fulvia is dead.

Enobarbus: Oh.—I see.—I'm very sorry, my lord.—But in a way, that rather simplifies things.

Antony: Unfortunately not. She caused a lot of trouble in Rome, which will require a lot of smoothing over with Caesar. But what's even worse is that Sextus Pompeius is threatening Caesar. And he's drawing a lot of support from all the people who supported his father, the Great Pompey. The whole empire's at risk, and here I am in Egypt eating, drinking, and—playing—with the Queen. Now how does that make me look?

Enobarbus: Not so good.

Antony: I'll have to tell her I'm returning to Rome. Tell the officers to make preparations to leave.

Enobarbus: Yes. At once.

(They leave.)

Act 1, Scene 3. *In Cleopatra's palace. Cleopatra, Charmian, Alexas, and Iras come in.*

Cleopatra (To Alexas): Alexas, go see what Antony is doing, but don't tell him I sent you. If he's unhappy, tell him I'm—dancing—having a good time. And if he's happy, tell him I'm sick—very sick. Go.

(Alexas leaves.)

Charmian: Madam, I shouldn't deal with Antony that way.

Cleopatra: How do you mean?

Charmian: I mean being contrary with him.

Cleopatra: Charmian, you don't know how to manage a man.

Charmian: If you try to control him, he might resent it. I would be patient with him.

(Antony comes in. Cleopatra immediately puts on an act.)

Cleopatra: Oh! I feel so sick!

Antony: I must speak to you, Cleopatra.

Cleopatra: I think I'm going to faint!—Charmian!

(She swoons, conveniently right into Charmian's arms.)

Antony: I wish you'd listen.

Cleopatra: I know what you're going to tell me. Your wife wants you back, so you're going back to her. I should have expected—

Antony: Will you just listen?

Cleopatra: Go ahead. Break my heart. Why must a woman be cast away when she—

Antony: Can I get a word in edgewise?

Cleopatra: Edgewise.—How appropriate. Like the blade of a knife. Yes, cut my heart out. It serves me right for believing all your words of love.

Antony: Good grief.

Cleopatra: You don't need to make up excuses why you have to leave. After all, you didn't make up any when you decided to stay. My beauty was reason enough.

Antony: I wish you would shut up and listen!—There's big trouble in Rome, and I have to go back. Sextus Pompeius is threatening to invade, and everyone who has any sort of grievance against the Triumvirate will go over to his side. As much as I'd like to stay here with you, I can't.—And as for my wife—she's dead.

Cleopatra: Is that true?

Antony: Read this.

(He hands Cleopatra the letter.)

Cleopatra: I don't see you crying over her.—Perhaps you wouldn't cry over me either.

Antony (Controlling his frustration): Please—listen to me.—My heart will always be here with you. I'll do whatever you want me to do. I'll go to war. I'll make peace. I'll dig a hole to the centre of the earth. Whatever you want. Do I have to prove myself any further?

Cleopatra: Words, words, words. I am almost convinced.

Antony: If you keep on like this, I will be very angry with you.

Cleopatra (To Charmian, mockingly): He will be very angry with me!

Antony (Firmly): I'm going. I'm not going to stand here and argue with you. Goodbye.

(He turns to leave, and she stops him and is suddenly conciliatory and sweet.)

Cleopatra: All right. Whatever you do—may the gods watch over you and give you success.

Antony: You know we'll always be together in our hearts, even if we're far apart.—Come.

(They leave, smiling, hand in hand.)

Act 1, Scene 4. *Caesar's house in Rome. Octavius Caesar is reading a letter. Lepidus is present. (Body language should signal that Lepidus is subservient to Caesar.)*

Caesar: Our distinguished colleague seems to have forgotten his responsibilities. He always did have a reputation as a man who enjoyed his pleasures, but he is stretching the limits of my patience. You wouldn't party like there was no tomorrow when there was an empire to govern—would you, Lepidus?

Lepidus: Definitely not, Caesar. But Antony's good qualities far outweigh his faults. And you know, nobody's perfect.

Caesar: Not a strong argument, Lepidus. An ordinary man may pursue his pleasures when he wishes and excuse his vices as being—well, simply human. And Antony has what we would call normal human vices. He likes to indulge. He has the Queen of Egypt as his lover, and I suppose he can't resist her. Personally, I don't care what he does as a man. But he is a Triumvir, and that means that duty must come before pleasure. I shouldn't have to tell him that. He's twenty years older than I am. He should know better. Here we are facing problems, and he's not here to help. I have every right to be angry.

(A Messenger comes in.)

Messenger: Caesar, Pompey has put together a large fleet. And a lot of people are joining up with him.

Caesar (To Lepidus): Romans! Some of them should have their asses kicked. Why do they run to Pompey? Because they loved his father?

Lepidus: There are always some malcontents.

Messenger: There is more news, my lords. Two pirates, Menecrates and Menas, are terrorizing the coast. No ship is safe with them out there. Our own patrols are afraid to challenge them.

Caesar (To Lepidus): Two of Pompey's friends.

Lepidus: He knows how to pick them.

Caesar: I really do wish Antony was here. Truly, I do.—We're going to have to assemble our armies and try to deal with Pompey—and hope—that Antony comes to his senses and comes back in time to help us. And we have not much time, Lepidus.

Lepidus: By tomorrow I'll know exactly what forces I have available for you.

Caesar: And I'll know what I have available, too. We'll hold council tomorrow, then.

Lepidus: I assume you'll keep me informed of any further developments?

Caesar: Of course. Goodbye, Lepidus.

Lepidus: Goodbye, Caesar.

(Lepidus leaves.)

Act 1, Scene 5. *Cleopatra's palace in Alexandria. Cleopatra comes in with Charmian. (Iras and Mardian are deleted from this scene.)*

Cleopatra: I wonder what he's doing now. What do you think, Charmian?

Charmian: I have no idea, madam.

Cleopatra: Perhaps he's walking about—or perhaps he's riding. Or perhaps he's conferring with the other Triumvirs. I'm sure he's thinking great thoughts. I wonder if he's thinking of me. He calls me his serpent of the Nile when he wants to tease me.—Yes, he must be thinking of me.—Julius Caesar was my lover when I was younger. And the Great Pompey couldn't take his eyes off me.

(Alexas comes in.)

Alexas: My Queen. A letter. *(He hands her the letter.)* And he sent you this pearl. *(He gives her the pearl.)* And he promises to give you new kingdoms to rule over.

Cleopatra: What sort of mood was he in when you left him?

Alexas: Hard to say, madam. Not happy. Not unhappy.

Cleopatra: Just as I would expect.—Did you see any of my messengers?

Alexas: I met twenty of them on the way. I don't know why you have to send so many.

Cleopatra: I can't help it. I can't go a single day without writing to him.—Charmian, did I ever love Julius Caesar this much?

Charmian (Sighing): Julius Caesar! Now there was a man!

Cleopatra: Oh, stop! Don't even compare them.

Charmian: You always praised Julius Caesar. You looked up to him so much.

Cleopatra: I was young in those days—and almost innocent.—But never mind. Get me some ink and paper. I want to write another letter to Antony.

(They leave.)

Act 2, Scene 1. *Pompey's house in Messina. Pompey comes in with Menecrates and Menas—all dressed for battle.*

Pompey: Menas, if there's any justice in heaven, the gods will be on our side.

Menas: The gods know what's best, Pompey. And they pick their own time.

Pompey: Nevertheless, I have complete confidence. I have a better fleet than Caesar does, and I'm getting new supporters all the time—a lot of people who loved my father. Mark Antony's in Egypt with his girlfriend, the Queen, so he won't get in our way. And Lepidus isn't even worth thinking about.

Menas: Caesar and Lepidus have been assembling a big army.

Pompey: Who says so?

Menas: I heard it from Silvius.

Pompey: Nonsense. They're sitting on their butts hoping that Antony will come back to save them.—He's the real soldier, after all, and everyone knows it.—But I'm sure he's too busy fucking his Queen to give a shit about Rome. And when he's not fucking, he's probably drunk—which is fine with me. Let him stay that way—drunk, and happy, and far away from here.

(Varrius comes in.)

Pompey: Varrius, what's the news?

Varrius: My lord, it is now quite certain that Mark Antony is on his way back to Rome.

Pompey: Huh—I'm surprised. But then it only proves that we have enough power for the other two to be scared shitless—right, Menecrates?

Menecrates: You said it, my lord.

Menas: It remains to be seen whether Caesar and Antony will still be on good terms. Antony's wife and brother fought against Caesar—although it was their idea, not Antony's.

Pompey: All three of the Triumvirs don't really get along, you know. You have two bosses and one errand boy. The bosses dislike each other, and the errand boy doesn't know whose ass to lick first. The First Triumvirate didn't last, and neither will this one. But it's possible they may put aside their differences long enough to combine against us. In which case, we have to have the strongest force possible.—Menas, Menecrates, let's go.

(They leave.)

Act 2, Scene 2. *The house of Lepidus in Rome. Enobarbus and Lepidus come in.*

Lepidus: Enobarbus, you should tell Antony to take a gentle tone with Caesar and not look for trouble.

Enobarbus: You know Antony. He'll say what he thinks. He doesn't hold back.

Lepidus: But this is no time for personal quarrels.

Enobarbus: Try telling that to Caesar.

Lepidus: Come, let's be reasonable. We must encourage diplomacy on both sides.

(Two entrances will now overlap. First, Antony and Ventidius come in, in the middle of a conversation.)

Antony (To Ventidius): We'll see how it works out here, Ventidius, and then we can move on the Parthians.

(Second, Caesar comes in from the other side with Maecenas and Agrippa, having their conversation.)

Caesar: Maybe yes, maybe no, Maecenas.—What do you think, Agrippa? *(An inaudible reply.)*

Lepidus: My friends! We have serious business to discuss. Whatever little problems there are among us, let's not make them any bigger. Let us all be polite and reasonable and try to agree.

Antony: Well said, Lepidus.

Caesar: Welcome home, Antony. It's good to see you.

Antony: Thank you. Likewise.

Caesar: Let's sit down.

(They all sit.)

Antony: I've heard that you've been unhappy with me—about things you believed were improper—even if they were none of your business.

Caesar: No, no. I'm not that sensitive.

Antony: Why should you mind if I prolonged my stay in Egypt?

Caesar: I'm sure I didn't mind what you were doing any more than you minded what I was doing. But if you were making your own political plans, then I'd have good reason to mind.

Antony: What plans?

Caesar: Your wife, Fulvia, and your brother rebelled against me—supposedly for your sake.

Antony: It's not true. My brother wasn't loyal to either one of us. And as for my wife, I could never control her. She acted on her own. You mustn't blame me.

(Pause for Caesar to reflect.)

Caesar: I sent you a letter in Alexandria, and you ignored it and dismissed my messenger.

Antony: It wasn't like that. He just came in at the wrong moment, and I didn't want to talk to him. I spoke to him the next day, so forget about it.

(Another pause.)

Caesar: We had an agreement, and you broke it.

Lepidus (Cautioning): Caesar—

Antony: It's all right, Lepidus. Let him say what he wants, even if he's wrong. *(To Caesar)* In what way did I break our agreement?

Caesar: I asked you for troops and weapons, and you refused.

Antony: I didn't mean to refuse. I simply didn't respond because I was—shall we say, distracted. I'm sorry for that. And as for Fulvia, she provoked trouble as a way of getting me to return to Rome. And I'm very sorry that happened.

Lepidus: Good for you, Antony.

Maecenas: My lords, all these matters should be set aside. You have to cooperate now and deal with the dangers facing Rome.

Enobarbus: Right. You can resume arguing afterwards.

Antony: Quiet. You're only a soldier.

Enobarbus: Excuse me for speaking the truth.

Antony: The Triumvirs are having a discussion.

Enobarbus: I'll shut up, then. *(He makes a gesture of zipping his mouth shut.)*

Caesar: Your man has made a point, Antony.—Let's be honest. We're very different, you and I. We can't pretend to be friends any more. But for the sake of Rome, we have to stick together—as Maecenas has said.—What I want to say is—we must have a personal bond regardless.

Agrippa: I have a suggestion, Caesar.

Caesar: Let's hear it, Agrippa.

Agrippa: Mark Antony is a widower now. And you have a sister—Octavia—who is also a widow. If you can see where I'm going with this.

Caesar: Ha! If Cleopatra were here now to hear this!

Antony: Never mind. Let Agrippa say what he's getting at.

Agrippa: It's simple. Let Antony marry Octavia. That would make you brothers-in-law. Not only would that bind you to each other, but it would squelch all the public gossip about the two of you not getting along.

Caesar: What do you say to that, Antony?

(Pause for Antony to consider.)

Antony: All right. I accept.

Caesar: I'm giving you a sister I love more than anyone else in the world. If you love her half as much I do, we'll be bound to each other forever, and there'll be no more quarrels between us.

Lepidus: Thanks the gods! Now we only have Pompey to worry about.

Antony: I must say, I never expected to fight Pompey. I've had friendly signals from him, and I should acknowledge them in some way. After that, if we still have to fight him, I'm ready.

Lepidus: We should move first and not wait for him to move against us.

Antony: Where is he now?

Caesar: South of here—near Mount Misena.

Antony: How big is his army?

Caesar: Big enough—and getting bigger. But his naval forces are his real power.

Antony: So I've heard.—I should have come back sooner.—Before we make our plans, let's take care of that—personal matter.

Caesar: I'll introduce you to Octavia. You won't be disappointed. She's very beautiful.

Antony: You come, too, Lepidus.

(Everyone leaves except Enobarbus, Agrippa, and Maecenas.)

Maecenas (To Enobarbus): So—your boss managed to tear himself away from the Queen of the Nile. Let's hope it's permanent.

(Enobarbus grunts ambiguously.)

Agrippa: What's she like? I want to know.

Enobarbus (Takes a deep breath, composing his thoughts): She's like a dream within a dream. Egypt is a dream to begin with, and she's another. She has this mysterious charm. She's not like any other woman. She's beautiful enough, but there's more to her than that. It's something inside her. People are instantly fascinated by her. I can't really describe it. And she surrounds herself with such luxury. And I don't mean vulgar luxury. It's like she's created another world to live in. Everything is exotic. Her barge is like a floating palace. In every square inch there's something to look at. All the gold, and jewels, and the tapestries, and the works of art—it's fantastic. And everywhere there's the smell of perfumes. And there are all these birds, and flowers, and lights.—Well!—Gentlemen, I tell you, if a man woke up there, he'd think he had died and gone to heaven.

Maecenas: Well, that's all over with for Antony once he marries Octavia. She's very different from all that. She's—you know—down to earth.

Enobarbus: Ah, yes—down to earth.—But can a man return to earth once he's been to heaven?

(A pause to let this sink in.)

Agrippa: Come along. Let's have a drink.

(They leave.)

Act 2, Scene 3. *Caesar's house in Rome. Antony comes in with the Soothsayer.*

Antony: Well, Soothsayer, do you miss Egypt?

Soothsayer: Very much, sir. And I wish you would return. Not for my sake, but for your own.

Antony: What do you mean?

Soothsayer: When you are in your own place, your spirit is supreme. It shines brightly. But when you're close to Caesar, it becomes dim. You should keep plenty of space between you.

Antony: I should be very annoyed with you for saying that. I've just married his sister.

Soothsayer: I say this only to you, my lord, and for your own sake. And something else. Caesar has a charm of good luck on his side. He's not necessarily better, or stronger, or smarter. He's just luckier. He will always beat you in any sort of contest.

Antony: That's enough. I don't want to hear any more. Go and tell Ventidius I want to speak to him.

(The Soothsayer leaves.)

Antony: He's right. Caesar is lucky. If we play any sort of game, or bet on anything, he always wins. *(Pause for reflection.)* Yes.—I'm going back to Egypt. I need Cleopatra. I only married Octavia to make peace with Caesar.

(Ventidius comes in.)

Ventidius: My lord.

Antony: Ventidius. I have a mission for you.

Ventidius: Yes, my lord!

Antony: You've got to take your army to Syria and stop the goddamn Parthians. Come with me.

(They leave.)

Act 2, Scene 4. *This scene is deleted.*

Act 2, Scene 5. *In Cleopatra's palace. Cleopatra is pacing back and forth out of boredom. Charmian, Iras, and Alexas are present.*

Cleopatra: I wish I had some news from Antony.

(A Messenger comes in.)

Messenger (Nervously): My Queen—I bring you news from Rome.

Cleopatra: Is something wrong?

Messenger: No, madam.

Cleopatra: Why do you have that look on your face? Has something happened to Antony? Tell me!

Messenger: No, madam. Antony is quite well. Perfectly well. And he and Caesar are on friendly terms again.—Um—

Cleopatra: Yes? And what else?

Messenger: Antony—has married—Octavia.

Cleopatra: What!

(She slaps the Messenger.)

Charmian: Madam!

Cleopatra (To the Messenger): It isn't so! He's not married!

Messenger: But he is, madam.

Cleopatra: No!

(She draws a knife, and the Messenger flees.)

Charmian: Madam, don't be angry with him! It's not his fault.

(Cleopatra puts the knife away and composes herself.)

Cleopatra: Yes.—You're quite right, Charmian.—Go and bring him back. I won't hurt him.

(Charmian goes out and returns with the Messenger.)

Cleopatra: I don't like to be upset by bad news.

Messenger: I was only doing my job, madam.

Cleopatra: Tell me once more. Is Antony married?

Messenger: Yes, madam. He has married Octavia, the sister of Caesar.—I'm very sorry, madam.

Cleopatra: You may go.

(The Messenger leaves.)

Cleopatra: Octavia—Octavia—Alexas, find out everything you can about her. I want to know what she looks like. Is she tall or short? How old is she? What colour hair does she have? And how does she style it? And how does she dress? I want to know everything.

Alexas: Yes, madam.

(He leaves.)

Cleopatra: How could he want her instead of me?—Oh, to hell with him! Let him have her if he wants her!—Octavia! *(She spits.)*—No—no—I don't want to lose him.—I mustn't lose him!—Ladies, I don't feel well.—Take me to my room.

(Charmian and Iras take Cleopatra out.)

Act 2, Scene 6. *Near Mount Misena. A trumpet flourish. Pompey and Menas come in from one side; Caesar, Lepidus, Antony, Enobarbus, Maecenas, and Agrippa come in from the other side.*

Pompey: All right, now that we've exchanged emissaries to guarantee our good behaviour, we can talk.

Caesar: You've had time to consider the deal we've offered you, Pompey. If you accept, we can avoid a war, and many lives will be saved.

Pompey: I would be entirely justified if I wanted revenge on Rome for the death of my father, you know.

Caesar: I can understand that, but we're here to talk diplomacy.

Antony (Aggressively): We're not afraid of you, Pompey. We're ready to kick your ass right out of Italy. And we have more men in arms than you do.

Pompey: For the moment perhaps.

Lepidus: Okay, look, we're not here to argue about whose armies are bigger. We've made you an offer, Pompey.

Caesar: Yes. Let's stick to that. Pompey, is it really worth fighting a war in the hope of doing better than what you'll get by agreeing with us?

Pompey: There is risk to both sides.

Caesar: Of course. That's why I'm willing to be pragmatic.

Pompey: So—I get to keep Sicily and Sardinia. And my friends Menas and Menecrates—

Caesar: The pirates.

Pompey: Ha, ha—as you wish.—They must stop their—activities. And I must send wheat to Rome.

Caesar: That's the deal.

Pompey (To Antony): I should be somewhat angry with you, Antony, for your unfriendly attitude. You know, when your wife and brother were making all that trouble, your mother came to Sicily to seek refuge, and I made her welcome.

Antony: I owe you for that favour.

(Pause.)

Pompey: Then let's shake hands and agree.

(Pompey shakes hands with the Triumvirs.)

Pompey: I didn't expect to see you in Rome, Antony.

Antony: If it weren't for you, I wouldn't be here. But I'm glad I returned.

Caesar: I'd say you've changed, Pompey.

Pompey: Perhaps my hardships show on my face. But inside, I'm still the same.

Lepidus: I would say this has been a good meeting.

Pompey: Yes, I would say so, too. Shall we put everything in writing?

Caesar: Yes. We'll do that now.

Pompey: Very good. And to celebrate the occasion, we'll have a feast aboard my ship.

Others: Yes! Yes!

Pompey: Come along, then.

(Everyone leaves except Enobarbus and Menas.)

Menas: We've met before, haven't we?

Enobarbus: Yes, at sea—where you've done quite well for yourself, by all accounts.

Menas: A man does what he's good at.

Enobarbus: We were all set to make war, you know.

Menas: That would've been fine with me. His father wouldn't have signed any treaty.

Enobarbus: I think we got the better of the deal.

Menas: It puts me out of business, that's for sure. Now I'll have to earn an honest living.—I was surprised that Mark Antony came back. I would have thought he'd be married to Cleopatra by now.

Enobarbus: He's married, all right, but not to Cleopatra. He just married Caesar's sister, Octavia.

Menas: No! Really?

Enobarbus: Yes.

Menas: Well!—Then those two Triumvirs will be like that *(Indicates with fingers pressed together)* from now on.

Enobarbus: I would say that is a hope more than a likelihood.

Menas: So he married her just for political reasons—is that it?

Enobarbus: That's the way I see it. They're totally mismatched.

Menas: Do you think so?

Enobarbus: Octavia's very straight—modest—obedient—sensible.

Menas: She's a good Roman wife, then. What's wrong with that?

Enobarbus: Nothing. But Antony will become bored with her very quickly. He's a man of passion. He'll go back to Cleopatra. And when he does, things will be worse than ever between him and Caesar.

Menas: You could be right. But let's not think about it now. Let's go aboard and join the party.

Enobarbus: I'm with you!

(They leave.)

Act 2, Scene 6. *On board Pompey's galley. Caesar, Pompey, Antony, Lepidus, Agrippa, Enobarbus, Menas, Maecenas, and Officers are seated at a table eating and drinking.*

Lepidus (To Antony): Antony, I'm told there are many exotic snakes in Egypt—and crocodiles, too.

Antony: The most expensive, believe me!

(General laughter.)

Pompey (To Lepidus): Have some more wine, Lepidus.

Lepidus: I'm getting too drunk already, sir.

Enobarbus: Lepidus gets to drink as much as he wants—and me, too. It was in the fine print, in case you missed it.

(General laughter.)

Menas (Aside to Pompey): Pompey, I must have a word with you privately.

Pompey (Aside to Menas): Oh, not now.

Menas (Aside to Pompey): Just for a moment, my lord.

(Pompey gets up and moves apart with Menas. The ensuing conversation is unheard by the others.)

Pompey: What's so important?

Menas: How would you like to be master of the world, my lord?

Pompey: What do you mean?

Menas: Just give me the word, and I will make you master of the whole world.

Pompey: Menas, you've had too much to drink.

Menas: Not so, my lord. For your sake, I've had very little to drink. Now consider this. The three Triumvirs are all here. If I were to cut the cables, we'd have them at our mercy. Then we could—you know.

(Pompey's expression is suddenly very grave. He pauses to consider.)

Pompey: If you had already done it, I would've said yes. But if I have to think about it—the answer is no. It would be—extremely dishonourable. I'm going to forget this conversation ever took place. Now sit down with the others and drink.

Menas: As you wish, my lord. *(Aside)* You'll never have another chance like this.

(Menas and Pompey return to the table. Pompey raises a cup.)

Pompey: Here's to Lepidus, the peace-maker!

Others: Hear! Hear!

Enobarbus: And here's to Menas!

Menas: And the same to you, Enobarbus!

(They both raise their cups.)

Pompey: Do they eat and drink like this in Alexandria, Antony?

Antony: Even more, sir. But if we keep going, we might match them. *(Raises his cup)* And here's to Caesar!

Others: To Caesar!

(Caesar acknowledges by raising his cup, but without enthusiasm.)

Caesar: Thank you. But you'll forgive me if I don't get too drunk. I like to keep my wits about me.

Antony: Oh, loosen up.

Enobarbus: Hey, aren't we going to dance? Antony knows all the Greek dances!

Antony: Yes! Yes! And I can dance all of you under the table no matter how drunk I am!

Pompey: I'll call for the musicians!

Caesar: No, no. Please, Pompey. You've been a gracious host, but we're going to call it a night. *(To his party)* We've had our fun. Now it's time we got back to shore.—Antony. Lepidus.

Lepidus (Quite drunk): Yes, yes.—Oh, the gods help me, I can hardly stand up.

Pompey: That's all right. I'll escort you.

(Everyone leaves except Enobarbus and Menas, who linger briefly.)

Menas: That was a party to remember, eh?

Enobarbus: It sure was. I'll have a headache tomorrow.

Menas: And a head to keep it in—by the grace of the gods.

Enobarbus: You are funny, Menas.

(They leave.)

Act 3, Scene 1. *A plain in Syria. The aftermath of a battle is suggested. Ventidius comes in with Silius and Soldiers. A body is being carried.*

Ventidius: So much for the Parthians. And here's the son of their king. *(He spits on the body.)* That's payback for the murder of Marcus Crassus. *[Author's Note: Marcus Crassus was in the First Triumvirate, along with Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great. He was governor of Syria and got into a war with the Parthians. They captured him and then murdered him.]*

Silius: It's a great victory, Ventidius. But some of the Parthians got away. We could chase them and wipe them out if we wanted to.

Ventidius: No, Silius. Antony will be happy enough with what I've done. If I do more, he'll be less happy.

Silius: Why should that be?

Ventidius: Because he's my superior, and I don't want to look better than him. As long as he considers himself to be the best soldier and the best general, I have to make sure I'm no better than second-best. Otherwise, I might spend the rest of my career on some island covered with bird shit, commanding a hundred guys with bad backs, allergies, and assorted phobias.

Silius: I get it. So where do we go now?

Ventidius: Athens. Antony's on his way there. He has a house. I want to be there waiting for him when he arrives. So we've got to get moving. *(To the Soldiers)* All right, everyone, let's move it!

(They all leave.)

Act 3, Scene 2. *Caesar's house in Rome. A trumpet flourish. Caesar, Antony, Lepidus, and Octavia come in. (Agrippa and Enobarbus are deleted from this scene.)*

Antony: Caesar, I must take leave of you and return to Athens.

Caesar: Take good care of Octavia. She's the bond that holds us together. Don't do anything to break it.

Antony: You sound like you have your doubts.

Caesar (Pausing to find the right words): I am hoping for the best.

Antony: Don't worry about me and Octavia. May the gods protect you, and may all the people of Rome support you. Now we have to go.

Caesar: Goodbye, sister.

(They share an emotional embrace. The audience must get the idea that Caesar is extremely devoted to his sister. Octavia whispers something to him, and he looks very sad. [Shakespeare doesn't explain this, but the suggestion is that Octavia has misgivings or forebodings.])

Caesar: Keep your spirits up, my dear. I'll write to you.

Antony: Now wish me good luck, sir.

(Antony embraces Caesar.)

Caesar: I wish you luck and happiness.

Antony: Thank you.

Lepidus: Goodbye, Antony.

Antony: Goodbye, Lepidus.

(A flourish as Antony and Octavia leave.)

Act 3, Scene 3. *This scene is deleted.*

Act 3, Scene 4. *Antony's house in Athens. Antony and Octavia come in. Antony is angry.*

Antony: Why shouldn't I be angry with your brother? He and Lepidus broke the truce and attacked Pompey—although I have no doubt it was entirely your brother's decision, and Lepidus automatically went along with it. All of a sudden, it's like I don't exist. He even speaks in public and hardly refers to me at all.—You know what that means, don't you? An empire—without—Antony.

Octavia: Antony, don't believe everything you hear. And don't quarrel with him. That puts me in the middle.

Antony: Octavia, if I lose my status, then you've married a bum, and what's the point? You'd be better off single. But if you want to go and talk to him and try to reason with him, that's fine with me. But in the meantime, I'm going to raise an army, and I'm going to make sure it's bigger than his. I'm not going to be number two behind someone who's twenty years my junior.

Octavia: I don't want the two of you to fall out with each other. I'm going to see him.

Antony: Good. Then you'll find out for yourself who's at fault. You can make arrangements for your trip. And stay in Rome as long as you like. Don't be in a hurry to come back. I'll be fine.

(They leave.)

Act 3, Scene 5. *Antony's house in Athens. Enobarbus is present when Eros comes in.*

Enobarbus: Eros, what have you heard?

Eros: Caesar and Lepidus attacked Pompey and beat him. But then Caesar double-crossed Lepidus and threw him in prison. He made up some bogus charges against him.

Enobarbus: I can see where this is leading.—Caesar versus Antony.—Where is Antony?

Eros: He's in the garden. He's angry. He wants to kill the officer that killed Pompey. It was one of our own officers.

Enobarbus: That's bad.

Eros: He wants to see you.

Enobarbus: All right. Let's go.

(They leave.)

Act 3, Scene 6. *Caesar's house in Rome. He is rather angry as he comes in with Agrippa and Maecenas.*

Caesar: That guy is the most egotistical son of a bitch I ever met! And that Cleopatra—she's another! He's made her Queen of Syria and Cyprus, and he's made his illegitimate children kings and given them territories to rule. But what burns me the most is what he's saying about me. He accuses me of not sharing the lands I won from Pompey. He accuses me of not returning some ships he loaned me. And he accuses me of throwing Lepidus in jail so I could steal his property.

Agrippa: The people are on your side, my lord.

Maecenas: Have you made any reply to his accusations, my lord?

Caesar: Yes, I sent him a reply to his slanders. I told him Lepidus had abused his position, and I had to deal with him. And as for sharing what I seized from Pompey, yes, Antony was entitled to a share, but I'm also entitled to a share of what he seized in Armenia and elsewhere.

Maecenas: Oh, he won't do that, I'm sure.

Caesar: Then I won't give him anything either.

(Octavia comes in with her Attendants.)

Octavia: Hello, brother.

Caesar: Octavia! I should have heard you coming from miles away. The whole city should have been cheering.

Octavia: I didn't want to attract any attention. I just wanted to come quietly. Antony believes you're going to make war against him. I had to come here and find out what was going on.

Caesar: I'll tell you what's going on. Where do you think Antony is now?

Octavia: In Athens.

Caesar: No. He's not in Athens. He's gone back to Alexandria. He's with Cleopatra. And what's more, they're raising forces and lining up allies from other kingdoms to fight against me.

Octavia: How do you know this?

Caesar: I have spies everywhere.

Octavia: Oh, the gods!—What shall I do?

Caesar: You'll stay here with me. This is your home. Forget about Antony. He never loved you. *(She starts to cry.)* It's all right, my dear. I'll take care of you.

Agrippa: We're happy to see you, madam.

Maecenas: Everyone in Rome loves you, madam.

Octavia (To Caesar): Is there going to be a war?

Caesar: Probably. But don't worry. Antony can't beat me. He can never beat me at anything. I have luck on my side.

(They all leave.)

Act 3, Scene 7. *Antony's camp, near Actium. [A geographical note: You are not likely to find this on a map, so look for Preveza, on the northwest coast of Greece. Preveza actually faces away from the sea and towards a large lake. There is a little finger-like promontory sticking up, pointing to Preveza. That's Actium, now called Aktio. That's where Antony's camp was. Caesar's camp was northwest of Preveza, facing the Mediterranean. The sea battle took place in open water, outside the channel that leads to the lake. A bridge now spans the channel between Preveza and Aktio.] Cleopatra and Enobarbus come in.*

Cleopatra: Why shouldn't I be here? I'm his ally. This war is against me.

Enobarbus: Madam, my concern is that your presence would be a distraction to Antony.

Cleopatra: Don't be silly. As the ruler of Egypt, I intend to be here to lead my forces.

Enobarbus: Whatever you say, madam.

(Antony and Canidius come in.)

Antony: Canidius, I can't believe that Caesar could have moved his forces so quickly. I have reports that he's already in Toryne. And he's challenging me to fight him at sea.

Cleopatra: And so you should.

Antony: Yes. I absolutely intend to.

Canidius: You should reconsider, my lord. You'd be playing into his strength.

Antony: He challenged me.

Enobarbus: So what? You challenged him to fight you man to man, one-on-one, to settle the whole war, but he wasn't stupid enough to do that.

Canidius: Exactly, my lord. And you challenged him to fight at Pharsalia, but he won't do that either. He knows where he has the advantage, and he knows where you have the advantage. He has the advantage at sea.

Cleopatra: It's a matter of honour! Caesar has challenged us!

Antony: That's right. I'm willing to fight him anywhere. It makes no difference to me.

Enobarbus: Our ships are no match for his. And his crews are much more experienced. Respectfully, my lord, my advice is to stick to land. All of your experience is in fighting on land. You'd be much better off.

Antony: No. I've made up my mind. We'll fight him at sea.

Cleopatra: I have sixty ships to contribute.

Antony: And I can turn some of my soldiers into sailors and put them on my ships to supplement the crews that I have. Whatever ships I can't man properly, I'll just get rid of. We'll sail from Actium and meet him in open water. If it doesn't work out, we can still fight him on land.

(A Messenger comes in.)

Antony: What news?

Messenger: My lord, Caesar has captured Toryne. He's been seen there—I mean, in person.

Antony: All right. *(He sends off the Messenger with a wave.)* Incredible.—Canidius, I want you to take our nineteen legions and twelve thousand cavalry and hold them on land. We'll get aboard our ships.—Cleopatra, come.

(A Soldier comes in, upset.)

Antony: What's the matter, soldier?

Soldier: Please, my lord. Don't fight him at sea. We want to fight him on land. We're not sailors. Let the Egyptians and Phoenicians sail the boats.

Antony: I know what I'm doing. Now step fretting. You have your orders.

(Antony, Cleopatra, and Enobarbus leave.)

Soldier: General, I know I'm right. Don't you think so?

Canidius: Yes, I do. But Antony is doing what Cleopatra thinks he should do. Anyway, we still have plenty of forces on land.

Soldier: Caesar is a bloody devil, sir. When he was still in Rome, he was moving his forces around in so many ways, our spies couldn't tell what he was doing.

Canidius: Who's his second-in-command?

Soldier: Taurus—or so I've heard.

Canidius: I know him.

(A Messenger comes in.)

Messenger: General, the Emperor is asking for you.

Canidius: Never a moment's rest. Messages, and more messages. The messengers will wear out their shoes, and that's how we'll lost the war.

(They leave.)

Act 3, Scene 8. *Caesar's camp. Caesar comes in with Taurus and Soldiers.*

Caesar: Taurus, I don't want you to engage our army on land until we're finished the battle at sea. Here are your orders.

(He gives Taurus a scroll.)

Taurus: Yes, my lord.

Caesar: We've got a golden opportunity to beat them.

Taurus: Yes, my lord.

(They leave. Quick segue to the next scene.)

Act 3, Scene 9. *Antony's camp. Antony and Enobarbus come in.*

Antony: I want our ships on the other side of the hill so we can see Caesar's fleet and judge the size of it.

Enobarbus: It shall be done, sir.

(They leave. Quick segue to the next scene.)

Act 3, Scene 10. *With the curtain down and lights dim, the sound of marching is heard. Then the sound of a sea battle is heard. The curtain up, in normal light, shows Enobarbus and Scarus, on land, looking away in the distance.*

Enobarbus: Scarus, look! The Egyptian ships are turning away! They're leaving the battle! That goddamn Cleopatra!

Scarus: We're fucked! And I mean royally!

Enobarbus: Antony's following her! See that?—I can't believe it! Antony's never run from a fight in his whole life! What a disgrace!

Scarus: I'm sick.

(Canidius comes in.)

Canidius: We've lost! We could have beaten them if Antony had stuck it out. Now what's the point of fighting any more? We might as well try to save ourselves.

Enobarbus: If you leave us, then there's no hope.

Canidius: Enough is enough. I've had it. I'm taking my forces and going over to Caesar's side. If the other commanders want to stay, that's their choice, and their risk. They'll have to go south and meet up with what's left of the navy.

Enobarbus: If I had any sense, I'd probably go with you. But I'll stick with Antony and take my chances.

Scarus: I will, too.

Canidius: Good luck to both of you.

(They leave—Enobarbus and Scarus one way, Canidius the other way.)

Act 3, Scene 11. *Cleopatra's palace. Antony comes in with Attendants. He walks back and forth, obviously upset with himself.*

Antony (Somberly): Friends, I have a ship full of gold. Take as much as you can carry and save yourselves.

First Attendant: We couldn't leave you, sir.

Antony: Yes, yes, go on. There's no point in staying.—I can't believe what I've done. How could I be so stupid?—I've lost myself.—Antony has lost Antony.—My friends, there's no reason why you should suffer because of my mistakes. I'll give you a letter to some friends of mine. You can go to them. You'll be safe. I insist. Go pack your things.

(The Attendants leave. Then Cleopatra comes in, supported by Charmian, Iras, and Eros. She appears reluctant, frightened, and faint. Antony's back is turned to her.)

Eros: Talk to him, madam.

Charmian: He needs you, madam.

Iras: Yes, madam.

Antony (Seeing Cleopatra): Oh, no, no, no, no!

Eros: Please, sir, talk to the Queen. She'll die if you don't comfort her.

Antony: She'll die? She'll die? I am dead! My reputation is destroyed!—When I think of my whole career—everything I've ever done—all the honour that's comes to me—It's all destroyed.

Cleopatra: Forgive me, Antony! I lost my nerve. But I didn't think you'd follow me.

Antony: How could I not follow you? I've been tied to you for so long, I hardly have a will of my own any more.

Cleopatra: I'm sorry.

Antony: Now I'm going to have to make peace with that—young man—young Octavian—who never even raised his sword at Philippi. Did you know that? He let his commanders do all the fighting. But I fought as well as commanded. I was the experienced soldier, not him—and I still am. This is the first time I've ever been in a position of weakness.—But then, I was never insanely in love before, was I?

Cleopatra: Forgive me, Antony. *(She is about to cry.)*

Antony (More composed): Don't cry. Just give me a kiss.

(They kiss.)

Antony: I'm tired. *(Calling)* Servants, bring me some wine and some food.—Who's been the lucky one yet again? Not Antony. Caesar.

(They leave.)

Act 3, Scene 12. *Caesar's camp in Egypt. Caesar, Agrippa, and Thidias are present, perhaps studying a map of Egypt on the wall. Dolabella comes in.*

Dolabella: Caesar, Antony has sent his emissary. No doubt, he's suing for peace.

Caesar: No doubt, Dolabella. Who's the emissary?

Dolabella: His old schoolmaster.

Caesar: Ha! A schoolmaster for an emissary! How the mighty have fallen.—Show him in, Dolabella.

(Dolabella leaves and returns immediately with the Emissary.)

Caesar: Come in, schoolmaster. How proud you must be of your pupil, eh?

Emissary: My lord Caesar, I am sent by Antony. Yes, I was just a humble teacher until yesterday—as insignificant as—

Caesar: As a worm in an apple—yes, I know. And with all the men of rank having fled for their lives, you're the only one left to be Antony's emissary. Congratulations. Now, what do you have to say?

Emissary: Antony acknowledges your victory and asks for your mercy. He asks to be allowed to stay in Egypt. If you won't allow that, then he asks to be allowed to live in Athens as a private citizen. Cleopatra accepts your authority over her. She asks that the crown of Egypt should pass to her heirs, who shall likewise be at your mercy.

Caesar: I don't care about Antony's requests. I'm more interested in Cleopatra. I'll give her what she wants—provided that she either kills Antony or banishes him from Egypt. Now go back and make your report.

Emissary: I will. Thank you, Caesar.

(The Emissary leaves.)

Caesar: Thidias, I need you to be clever for me.

Thidias: Always, my lord.

Caesar: I want to drive a wedge between Cleopatra and Antony. I want you to go to her as my personal emissary and tell her that she can basically have whatever she wants if she gets rid of Antony. You can improvise in my behalf, and I'll back you up. Anything within reason.

Thidias: Count on me, my lord.

Caesar: And observe Antony carefully. I need to know his state of mind.

Thidias: I will do that, my lord.

(Thidias leaves.)

Act 3, Scene 13. *In Cleopatra's palace. Cleopatra, Enobarbus, Charmian, and Iras come in.*

Cleopatra: Enobarbus, do you think it's my fault that we lost?

Enobarbus: Speaking as a soldier, madam, I must say it's Antony's fault. It's true that you fled. Perhaps you were frightened. But he should have stayed regardless. Not only did he lose the battle, but he disgraced himself as well.

Cleopatra: I don't want to hear any more.

(The Emissary comes in with Antony.)

Antony: And that's what he said? The Queen gets what she wants if she gives me up—or better yet, kills me?

Emissary: Yes.

Antony: Do you hear that, Cleopatra! Send Caesar my head on a platter and you can have anything you want from him!

Cleopatra: Never!

Antony (To the Emissary): Go back to that young Octavius Caesar, Master of the World, and tell him that I challenge him to fight me, man to man, sword against sword. He's young and I'm old, so it should be a fair fight.—Come. I'll write it in a letter, and you can take it.

(Antony and the Emissary leave.)

Enobarbus (Aside to himself): He may be young, but he's not stupid.

(A Servant comes in.)

Servant: My Queen, Caesar has sent an emissary.

Cleopatra: All right. Bring him in.

(The Servant goes out and returns immediately with Thidias.)

Cleopatra: You have a message from Caesar?

Thidias: Yes, madam—however, it's confidential.

Cleopatra: These are my friends. I have no secrets from them. You may speak freely.

Thidias: As you wish, madam. Caesar wants to reassure you not to be worried about your safety. He understands that your devotion to Antony was based on your fear of him, not love. *(Cleopatra is about to react angrily but checks herself.)* Whatever mischief has been done to your reputation is not your fault.

(Cleopatra pauses before answering. The suggestion to the audience is that she intends to play Caesar along from now on. Her reaction a moment ago was to help set up this suggestion.)

Cleopatra: Caesar is wise. He understands that I was—conquered—by a dominant man. It happens to women all the time. We are weak that way.

Enobarbus (Aside to himself): I'd better leave before I say the wrong thing.

(He leaves.)

Thidias: Caesar would like to accommodate your needs. He will grant you anything you wish—but—he wants to hear that you have broken off with Antony permanently.

Cleopatra: What is your name?

Thidias: Thidias.

Cleopatra: Thidias, Caesar chooses his emissaries well. Please tell him that I throw myself at his mercy—and I accept his judgment, whatever it may be.

Thidias: Madam, you are as wise as you are noble. I kiss your hand.

(Thidias kisses her hand.)

Cleopatra (Sighing for effect): How often did Caesar's father, Julius Caesar, kiss that hand! *[Author's note: Octavius was both the nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar.]*

(Antony comes with Enobarbus in time to see the hand kiss.)

Antony: What the hell is going on! Who are you?

Thidias: I am sent by Caesar, the greatest man in the world, to convey kind reassurance to the Queen of Egypt.

Enobarbus (Aside to the audience): This guy's about to get his ass kicked.

Antony (Calling): Servants!—Servants!—God damn it! Where are you?

(Several servants come in.)

Antony: Take this dog outside and whip him!

Thidias: Mark Antony! I am Caesar's—

Antony: Yeah, I know. You're Caesar's lackey. *(To the Servants)* Give him a good whipping, and then I'll send him back with a message for Caesar.

(The Servants take Thidias out. Then Antony turns angrily to Cleopatra.)

Antony: And you! You were Cleopatra, who supposedly loved me—but who are you now? To think that I left a good wife behind to come back here and be so misused by you!

Cleopatra: Antony—

Antony: The mistress of emperors! And when one dies, you find another—for who can resist Cleopatra! You can have any man you want, can't you!

Cleopatra: Stop it! Why are you saying these things?

Antony: To see a servant of Caesar kiss your hand! Am I sunk that low? Perhaps I should just put a noose around my neck and find Caesar's hangman and give him a gold coin and say, "Please, sir, make it quick so I don't feel it."

(A Servant returns with Thidias.)

Servant: We have done as you instructed, my lord. He begged for mercy.

Antony (To Thidias): Go back and tell Caesar what happened to you. Tell him I don't appreciate being kicked when I'm down. He's too full of himself after a run of good luck. Tell him I hate his guts. And if he doesn't like that, he can whip one of my people he's taken prisoner, and we'll call it even. You tell him that. Now get out of here!

(Thidias leaves.)

Cleopatra: Are you finished?

Antony: How can you suck up to Caesar like that?

Cleopatra: You should know me better than that.

Antony: You don't love me any more. Admit it.

Cleopatra (Looking up): Gods, if I do not love Antony any more, strike me dead now, and all my children, too!

(A pause. Antony calms down.)

Antony: Caesar has made camp near Alexandria. We still have a substantial army—and a substantial navy.—Agh! What's wrong with me? What could I have been thinking? We're not beaten yet. It's just a temporary setback. Do you hear me? I'll show that punk what a real fight is. The next time you see me, I'll be covered with blood—but it won't be mine!

Cleopatra: Now you're talking like the soldier you really are.

Antony: I'll fight like never before—ruthlessly! No mercy to the enemy!—Come, my Queen. Let's have one more night of feasting and fun. I'll invite all the captains who are still with me. We'll lift their spirits. We'll turn them into tigers again.

Cleopatra: It's my birthday. I intended to celebrate it quietly—but we'll do it your way. It'll be like old times.

Antony: And, believe me, I'm going to beat Caesar for once. His luck is about to change—and so is mine.—But first, everyone gets good and drunk!

(Everyone leaves except Enobarbus.)

Enobarbus: I can see what's coming. He'll go out to do battle, and he'll be so worked up with his warrior spirit, he won't be able to think straight. He'll make mistakes—and a lot of men will die. And

I'll probably be one of them.—I've traveled a long road with this guy, but I've reached my end. No more. That's it. I've got to leave him.

(He leaves.)

Act 4, Scene 1. *Caesar's camp near Alexandria. Caesar comes in, holding a letter, along with Agrippa and Maecenas.*

Caesar: What an insult. He calls me a boy and says he could kick my ass out of Egypt. And once again he's challenging me to fight him man to man. And he had Thidias beaten. I think he's lost his mind.

Maecenas: That's exactly what it is, sir. He's unhinged. His emotions are out of control. That's why we should attack now and finish him off. He's not thinking like a general any more.

Agrippa: You should insult him back, my lord. Make him even angrier.

Caesar: Yes. I'll do that.—All right, then. Tell the commanders we attack tomorrow. With all the defectors we picked up from Antony's side, we'll have the advantage. Feed everybody well tonight. We've got plenty of food. I want them feeling strong tomorrow.—You know, I almost feel sorry for that son of a bitch.

(They leave.)

Act 4, Scene 2. *Cleopatra's palace. Antony, Cleopatra, Enobarbus, Charmian, Iras, and Alexas come in.*

Antony: So he refuses to fight me man to man?

Enobarbus: Yes. He says he's too lucky, and it would be unfair to you.

Antony: That insolent punk! That boy!—Who can hardly grow a beard!—Oh, I'll fight him tomorrow! On land or sea! I don't care! I'll kill him or die trying!—Are you with me?

Enobarbus: We'll go for broke, sir. We'll fight.

Antony: You're a good man, Enobarbus. *(A pause for Antony to become calmer.)* We'll have a good dinner tonight.—Yes.—Why not? *(He now becomes somber.)* You servants have all been good to me. I'm grateful. Give me your hands.

(He shakes hands with the Servants in a very serious way. Cleopatra reads a fatalistic tone into this action.)

Cleopatra (Aside to Enobarbus): What does he mean?

Enobarbus (Aside to Cleopatra): He means goodbye.

Antony: All of you—treat me the way you did when I was still lord over half the empire. This may be for the last time. So stay with me just one more night. That's all I ask.

(The women look sad, but Alexas looks more frightened. [This is an important signal to the audience, because he is going to desert.])

Enobarbus: Please, my lord. That's not what we want to hear.

Antony (Forcing a smile): Oh, come, come. It's all right. I want you all to be happy. I'm very confident of victory. We'll win, don't you worry.—Now, let's eat and drink—and be merry. *(A significant— but very short — look passes across his face with these last words. The audience understands what is left unsaid.)*

(They all leave.)

Act 4, Scene 3. *The night watch in front of Cleopatra's palace. The stage should be dimly lit with an eerie blue light. Four Guards are standing still. There is dead silence at first. Then, gradually, a mysterious sound is heard. [The original play indicates the sound of oboes, but the Director is free to create any low-pitched sound.] It seems to be coming from underground. The Guards look at each other and look all around.*

First Guard: Do you hear that?

Second Guard: Yes.

Third Guard: What is that? Where's it coming from?

Second Guard: I don't know.

Fourth Guard (Bending down): It seems to be coming from underground.

Second Guard: Is it? *(He listens.)* How could that be?

First Guard: It must be an omen—from the gods.—A good omen, do you think?

Third Guard: No. More likely a bad omen.

Second Guard: Perhaps it's Hercules—Antony's family god.

(The sound seems to move. The Third Guard indicates this by pointing.)

Third Guard: Hercules is leaving him.

First Guard: Let's go see—just for a minute. Come on.

(The Guards leave, following the sound.)

Act 4, Scene 4. *Morning in Cleopatra's palace. Antony and Cleopatra come in with Charmian and Attendants (but not Alexas).*

Antony (Calling): Eros! My armour!

(Eros comes in with the armour.)

Antony: Help me get this on.

(Eros helps with the armour, somewhat clumsily, and then Cleopatra tries to help.)

Antony: No, no, my dear, not like that.—Eros, come on. You're all thumbs today. What's the matter?
(Eros finishes.) That's better.—There. *(To Cleopatra)* If you could watch me in action today, you'd see for yourself I haven't lost my touch.

Cleopatra: I believe you.

Antony (Looking around): Where's Alexas today? Sleeping late?

Charmian: No one's seen him.

(Several Captains come in with Soldiers.)

First Captain: Good morning, General. I hope you're well-rested.

(Cleopatra shakes her head subtly.)

Antony: Yes, yes. Don't worry about me. I'm fine.—My, you all look splendid today!

(A pause while Antony prepares to say goodbye to Cleopatra.)

Antony: I don't want a big scene now. You'll just get a soldier's kiss, all right? *(He gives her a somewhat restrained kiss. There is some lingering eye contact before Antony turns to speak to his Captains and Soldiers.)* All right, then. Who's ready for a fight?

Captains and Soldiers: We are, sir!

Antony: Let's go.

(He leaves with the Captains and Soldiers. Cleopatra looks somberly after his departure. Then she walks out slowly in the other direction, arm in arm with Charmian.)

Act 4, Scene 5. *Antony's camp at Alexandria. A trumpet flourish. Antony and Eros come in and are met by a Soldier.*

Soldier: May the gods grant you victory, General!

Antony: I should have fought Caesar on land the last time. That was my mistake. And our allies went over to Caesar's side because of it.

Soldier: And another soldier left this morning.

Antony: Who?

Soldier: Enobarbus.

Antony: Enobarbus!—He's gone?

Soldier: He defected.

Eros: My lord, all his belongings are still here.

Antony (To the Soldier): You're sure of this?

Soldier: Absolutely, General.

Antony (Very sadly): Eros, I want you to pack Enobarbus's things so I can send them to him in Caesar's camp.—I want to write him a letter, too—and send him a few gifts—for his many years of friendship.—Too bad.—Enobarbus.

(They all leave.)

Act 4, Scene 6. *Caesar's camp near Alexandria. A trumpet flourish. Caesar comes in with Agrippa, Enobarbus, and Dolabella. (The suggestion to the audience must be that Enobarbus is a mere hanger-on.)*

Caesar: Agrippa, give the order to attack. And make sure all the commanders know that I want Antony taken alive.

Agrippa: Yes, my lord. *(He starts to leave.)*

Caesar: Oh, and something else.—I want all of Antony's allies who defected to be up front, so he has to face them first. Let him vent his anger on his old friends.

Agrippa: Very good, my lord.

(Agrippa leaves.)

Caesar: Dolabella, come.

(Dolabella leaves with Caesar. Enobarbus is left standing there.)

Enobarbus: Alexas deserted—and Caesar hanged him anyway.—As for me, and Canidius, and a few others—we're just tolerated. We're nobodies.—I shouldn't have done it. I'm ashamed now.

(A Soldier comes in.)

Soldier: Sir, you are Enobarbus?

Enobarbus: Yes.

Soldier: Antony has sent you all your personal belongings.

Enobarbus: He's done what!

Soldier: He's sent you all your things—and a few gifts as well.

(Enobarbus is stricken with great remorse and struggles to hold back tears.)

Enobarbus: I don't want any of it. You keep it.

Soldier: I can't do that, sir. Come now, the messenger is waiting. You must escort him back across the lines. I have to return to my post.

(The Soldier leaves. Enobarbus collapses in tears.)

Enobarbus: Antony—Antony—how could you be so kind to a traitor like me?

(The scene ends without an exit.)

Act 4, Scene 7. *On the battlefield. Sounds of trumpets, drums, and fighting. Agrippa comes in with Soldiers.*

Agrippa: We have to retreat! This is worse than I expected—and Caesar's in trouble!

(They leave. More sounds. Antony comes in with Scarus, who is wounded.)

Scarus: We've got them on the run, General!

Antony: You've got a bad wound, Scarus. Are you sure you can make it?

Scarus: I'll be all right.

(A distant trumpet.)

Antony: They're sounding the retreat.

Scarus: Let 'em run like rabbits! I'll still slaughter them—ha!

Antony: You'll get a big reward when this is all over.—Come on.

(They leave. Quick segue to the next scene.)

Act 4, Scene 8. *Antony comes in with Scarus and other Soldiers. Distant drums.*

Antony: We've chased him all the way back to his camp. By tomorrow we'll bag the lot of the them. You men have been superb!

Soldiers: Thank you, General!

(Cleopatra comes in.)

Antony: Ah, the Queen is here! *(He embraces her.)* My goddess! My inspiration!

Cleopatra: Oh, Antony—I was so afraid!

Antony: The old soldier can still kick ass.—And this guy *(Indicating Scarus)*—You should have seen him. He was a devil out there.

Cleopatra *(To Scarus)*: My good friend! I'll give you a suit of armour made of gold. It once belonged to a king.

Antony: He deserves it.—Let's march through the city. I want to hear everyone cheering. By the gods, this is a great day!

(He takes Cleopatra by the hand, and everyone leaves.)

Act 4, Scene 9. *Caesar's camp at night. Suggestion of moonlight. Sentries come in slowly and discover a body.*

First Sentry: Look! There's someone!

(They rush to examine it and turn it over.)

Second Sentry: I know this man. It's Enobarbus—one of the deserters from Antony.

First Sentry (Feeling for vital signs): He's dead.

Second Sentry: I don't see any blood. What could've happened to him?

First Sentry: Suicide, maybe? Could be poison. What do you think?

Second Sentry: We'd better carry him back to the barracks and let the surgeon have a look at him.

First Sentry: Yes, yes.—Too bad.—Too bad.

(They carry the body out.)

Act 4, Scene 10. *Morning in Antony's camp. Antony, Scarus, and other Soldiers come in.*

Antony: They've changed their plans. They're attacking by sea. They don't want to fight us on land again.

Scarus: They might still, General. You can't be sure what Caesar will do.

Antony: You're right. We'll keep our army here on high ground so we can keep an eye on them. We still have all of Cleopatra's ships, plus what's left of our own. They'll intercept Caesar's fleet.—Come on.

(They leave. Quick segue to the next scene.)

Act 4, Scene 11. *In Caesar's camp. Caesar comes in with two Captains and a few Soldiers.*

Caesar: We'll keep our army in the valleys. We won't move unless Antony attacks first—which I don't think he'll do. He's got most of his men in his ships now.—Come on.

(They all leave. Quick segue to the next scene.)

Act 4, Scene 12. *Near Alexandria. Antony and Scarus come in.*

Antony: Caesar's army hasn't moved. I have to go up higher to see what's happening on the sea. Stay here.

(Antony leaves. Far-off noise of a sea battle.)

Scarus (Looking worried): Swallows have built nests in the sails of Cleopatra's ships. And the soothsayers refuse to say what it means. If it were a good sign, they would have said so right away.—I don't like it.

(Antony returns, very disturbed.)

Antony: That bitch! That goddamn whore!

Scarus: What's happened, General?

Antony: She's sold us out! All the Egyptian ships have surrendered! They're even celebrating with Caesar's crews!—Wait till I get my hands on that bitch!—*Scarus*, tell our men to make a run for it. Tell them to save themselves. That's an order.

Scarus: Yes, General.

(Scarus leaves.)

Antony: I'm finished.—It's all come down to this.—Betrayed.—All those brave men who followed me—and for what? To be sold out by that two-faced bitch.—Everything I did was for her. And now I'm ruined.—*(Calling)* Eros!—Eros—Where is he?

(Cleopatra comes in.)

Antony: You! You devil! You snake! Get out of my sight!

Cleopatra: What? Why are you angry?

Antony: Get out of here before I give you what you deserve! I hope Caesar takes you prisoner and drags you in chains through your own streets! I hope he puts you in a cage and takes you back to Rome and lets everyone pay to see the monster of the Nile! And I hope Octavia claws your eyes out!

(Cleopatra flees.)

Antony: Yes, run, you bitch! You whore!—*(Calling)* Eros! Where the hell are you?

(He leaves.)

Act 4, Scene 13. *In Cleopatra's palace. Charmian, Iras, and Mardian are there when Cleopatra runs in.*

Cleopatra: Help me! He's going to kill me!

Mardian: Who is, madam?

Cleopatra: Antony! He's in a rage! He's going to kill me!

Charmian: Madam, go to the tombs and lock yourself in. We'll tell Antony—uh, we'll say—

Iras: She's committed suicide!

Charmian: Perfect! We'll tell him you're dead.

Cleopatra: Yes.—All right.—Mardian, you go tell him. Tell him—I died calling out “Antony.” Make it convincing. I want him to stop being angry. And then come back and tell me what his reaction was.

Mardian: Yes, madam. I will.

(They all leave.)

Act 4, Scene 14. *In Cleopatra's palace. Antony comes in slowly with his attendant Eros. Antony is very somber.*

Antony: Eros, have you ever watched the clouds—how they change shape?

Eros: Yes, my lord.

Antony: One minute they look like a bear. Then they look like a lion. And after that, they're something else. But really it's all just water.

Eros: Yes, my lord.

Antony: I'm like a cloud now, Eros. I can't hold my shape any more. What I was, I no longer am.—All the things that have happened since I came here—they all happened because of her. I thought she loved me.—When I think of all the loyal men who believed in me—and who died for my cause—because I believed in her.—She betrayed me.—And where is my cloud now, Eros? It's dissolved into the air, never to return. There's nothing left for me, Eros. I can only bow to defeat—and end my life with some dignity.

(Mardian comes in.)

Antony: Your mistress has destroyed me!

Mardian: No, no, my lord! Believe me, she loved you. She lived only for you.

Antony: That faithless bitch will die!

Mardian: She's already dead, my lord. She killed herself. Her last words were—"Antony!—Antony!—My dearest Antony!"

(A long pause while Antony digests this and changes his demeanor.)

Antony (To Mardian): Go.

(Mardian leaves.)

Antony: Help me off with my armour, Eros. *(Eros attends to the armour.)* I'm no longer a soldier, Eros. I'm just very, very tired. I think it's time that I had a very long sleep. *(He holds a piece of the armour and regards it, touching it gently.)* All these dents and scars—every blow taken with honour—every fight fought with honour.—Leave me for a moment, Eros.

(Eros leaves.)

Antony: Cleopatra—I will join you—and I hope you will forgive me.—There's nothing to live for now. My cloud is gone. Antony will never be Antony again.—Where are you now, my Queen? I can see you resting peacefully on a bed of flowers—roses. Yes, roses. And I can see beautiful birds of all colours. And angels all around you. And there must be sweet music. And we will dance and be merry together as we once were.—Oh, we'll give all the souls in heaven something to look at, won't we?—Won't we?—*(Calling)* Eros!

(Eros returns.)

Eros: Yes, my lord?

Antony: My good fellow—Eros.—Do you remember the promise you once made me?

Eros: Promise, my lord?

Antony: I made you promise—and you did promise—that when the time came—you would kill me—for the sake of my honour.

Eros: My lord! No!

Antony: The time has come, Eros. Think of it as a blow against Caesar, to deny him the satisfaction of capturing me or killing me.—Come now, boy. Be brave.

Eros: No, my lord! The gods will not allow me!

Antony: Would you rather see me tied in ropes and dragged through the streets in a victory parade for Caesar? Would you wish for me such humiliation?

Eros: Never, my lord.

Antony: Then do me this one last favour. You've got your sword.

Eros: Please don't ask me to, my lord.

Antony: I hold you to your promise, Eros. If you love me, you will do this.

(A pause.)

Eros: Then turn away, my lord. I would not look in your eyes.

(Antony turns his head.)

Antony: There, boy. I've turned my head.

Eros: Then—goodbye, my lord.—And remember Eros, who loved you well.

(Eros stabs himself.)

Antony: Eros!

(Eros tries to smile and then dies.)

Antony: You're the brave one, Eros. You and the Queen both. You have taught me how to die.

(He falls on his sword, but the wound is not fatal.)

Antony: Guards!—Guards!

(Decretas and several Guards come in.)

Decretas: My lord! What happened?

Antony: Decretas—finish it for me.—I want to die.—Guards—

Guards: No!

(The Guards leave in a panic.)

Decretas: They'll all leave now.

Antony: Decretas—

(Decretas picks up Antony's sword.)

Decretas: This sword will buy me good favour with Caesar.

(He starts to leave but runs into Diomedes coming in.)

Diomedes: What's going on?

Decretas: He tried to kill himself.

(Decretas leaves.)

Antony: Diomedes—don't leave me like this.—Finish it.

Diomedes: My lord! Cleopatra sent me.

Antony: Cleopatra? But she's dead.

Diomedes: No, my lord, she's not dead. She sent you a false message because she was afraid you'd kill her. My lord, she never conspired with Caesar. She never betrayed you. She's locked herself in the tombs. She sent me to you because she was worried about how you'd react to her message.

Antony *(Groaning)*: Ohh—Diomedes—too late.—Call my guards.

Diomedes: Guards! Guards!

(Several Guards come in.)

Antony: Carry me—to Cleopatra—and then we can say our goodbyes—my good lads.

(They carry out Antony and Eros's body.)

Act 4, Scene 15. *Cleopatra, Charmian, and Iras are in the tombs. They are on an upper level at the rear of the stage. Some sort of door or gate protects the upper level. Diomedes comes in below.*

Diomedes: Madam, he's barely alive. The guards have brought him.

Cleopatra: Oh!

(The Guards carry Antony in.)

Cleopatra: Antony! Who did this to you?

Antony: I did it to myself—a poor job, I'm afraid.—But now I get to kiss you one last time.

(Cleopatra rushes down to him. [In the original play, she has Antony carried up because she is afraid to come down where she might be captured by Caesar's men. The Director can do it that way if

he wants, but it's clumsy stagecraft and all wrong for Cleopatra's motivation.] She kisses him many times.)

Cleopatra: Antony!—Antony!

Antony: Egypt—I'm going to die.

Cleopatra: No! Don't leave me!

Antony: Listen to me.—Send to Caesar and ask for safety for yourself—but don't trust any of his men—except Proculeius. You can trust him.

Cleopatra: Antony!—Don't die!—Don't die!

(She weeps.)

Antony: Come now, Egypt. A Queen must be strong—especially in defeat.—Look at me. I'm not crying. I've had the greatest life of any man who ever lived.—So many memories.—It's all right, my love.—You see, you have your Antony back in your arms again—like before.—Egypt—I must leave you now.

(He dies. She clutches his body to her and cries.)

Cleopatra: Egypt?—Am I still Egypt?—No—I am no one without you. *(She composes herself and becomes calm.)* Ladies, help me bury him. We will be strong and calm—like Romans.

(They leave, carrying Antony's body.)

Act 5, Scene 1. *Caesar's camp near Alexandria. Caesar comes in with Agrippa, Dolabella, Maecenas, Gallus, and Proculeius.*

Caesar: Dolabella, I want you to go to Antony and ask him to surrender. Tell him there's no point in dragging it out. Let's get it over with.

Dolabella: Yes, my lord.

(He leaves. Then Decretas comes in, showing Antony's sword.)

Caesar: Who are you? Put that sword away!

Decretas: Hail, Caesar! My name is Decretas, servant to Antony. He is dead. This is his sword. I've brought it to you as a gift. I want to serve you, if you'll have me.

Caesar: Antony—is dead?

Decretas: Yes, my lord.

Caesar: Did you kill him?

Decretas: No, my lord. He took his own life—with this sword. You can see his blood on it.

(Caesar takes the sword reverently.)

Caesar: Where was the thunder? Where was the lightning? Where was the earthquake—to announce his death? Why did I not hear half the world cry out? *(He touches the blood.)* The blood of a giant.—I touch the blood of a giant.

Agrippa: Even a giant must die. Even Mark Antony.

Caesar: He was once my friend. We fought together at Philippi. We ruled together. He was the bravest man I ever knew. But our fates were different and pulled us apart. It was inevitable that it should end like this.—Still, I would have wished otherwise.

(A Messenger comes in.)

Caesar: Who are you?

Messenger: I am sent by my mistress, the Queen. She wishes to know what your intentions are concerning her. She has locked herself in the tombs.

Caesar: Tell your Queen not to worry. She'll be treated kindly. I'll send her a message soon. You can return now.

Messenger: Most gracious Caesar, thank you.

(He leaves.)

Caesar: Proculeius, I want you to go to her. Tell her—tell her that she will be treated properly. Tell her anything, just so she doesn't kill herself. I want her alive. I'm going to parade her as a prisoner. The historians will write—*(He makes a gesture with his hands spread, suggesting a front page headline.)*—"Caesar Captured Cleopatra!"

Proculeius: I'll go, my lord.

Caesar: Gallus, you go with him. Take some soldiers, but keep them out of sight.

Gallus: Yes, my lord.

(Gallus and Proculeius leave.)

Caesar: And Dolabella—No, I already sent him. That's all right. I'll wait for him to come back.—Everyone else come with me. I have some letters to show you that will prove that this war was Antony's fault. I was always nice to him. I didn't want to fight him, but he gave me no choice.

(They leave.)

Act 5, Scene 2. *In the tombs. Cleopatra, Charmian, and Iras are again on the upper level.*

Proculeius comes in.

Proculeius: Hail, Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt! I come from Caesar. He wishes to come to terms with you in a kindly way.

Cleopatra: Who are you?

Proculeius: I am Proculeius.

Cleopatra: I know your name. Antony said you could be trusted.

Proculeius: I give honour to Antony for that.

Cleopatra: If your master wishes to come to terms, tell him I wish to retain Egypt so I can pass it on to my heirs. I will thank him humbly for this.

Proculeius: Caesar will be kind and generous to you if you surrender formally and place yourself at his mercy.

Cleopatra: There's nothing else I can do. He has won.—Yes, I am surrendering. I will meet with him.

(Cleopatra comes down. Then Gallus and the Soldiers rush in and seize her.)

Iras and Charmian: No! No!

(They come down.)

Gallus: We've got her!

(Cleopatra draws a dagger to kill herself, but Proculeius disarms her.)

Proculeius: Don't be foolish!

Cleopatra: Let me die!

Proculeius: Don't insult Caesar that way. He wishes only to comfort you.

Cleopatra: I know what he wants to do with me! I'll die first! I'll starve myself! I'll drown myself! I'll—

Proculeius: Stop! Stop! My Queen, there's no reason for this. Everything will be all right, I assure you.

(Dolabella comes in.)

Dolabella (To Proculeius): Caesar sent me to take charge of the Queen.

Proculeius: All right. Take good care of her. *(To Cleopatra)* I'll tell Caesar what your wishes are.

Cleopatra: To die! That is my wish!

(Proculeius leaves with Gallus.)

Dolabella: Please, madam. Don't talk about dying to Caesar. He won't like that.

Cleopatra: You know what he intends to do with me, don't you?

Dolabella: I—I can't tell you, madam.

Cleopatra: He's going to drag me in chains through the streets—for his glory—and my humiliation. That's what he's going to do. Isn't it? (*Dolabella is unable to answer. The suggestion is that he sympathizes with Cleopatra.*) You don't need to say it. I can read it on your face.

(*A trumpet flourish. Caesar, Proculeius, Gallus, and Maecenas come in.*)

Dolabella: Caesar, madam.

(*She kneels.*)

Caesar: It's all right. Stand up.

(*She rises.*)

Cleopatra: I am at your mercy, Caesar.

Caesar: The war is over. I'm not out for revenge. I'm prepared to be quite liberal with you. But if you embarrass me by killing yourself, your children will suffer for it.

Cleopatra: No doubt, you will want a full accounting of my wealth. I've made a list of everything I own. (*She produces a paper and gives it to him.*) My treasurer will vouch for its accuracy. (*Calling*) Seleucus!

(*Seleucus comes in.*)

Seleucus: Yes, madam?

Cleopatra: I want you to verify the list of my possessions so that Caesar knows I haven't hidden anything from him.

(*Caesar hands him the paper.*)

Cleopatra: You must tell Caesar the truth, Seleucus.

(*Seleucus studies the list and frowns.*)

Cleopatra: Well? Have I hidden anything?

(*The suggestion in Seleucus's response is that he is ditching Cleopatra in order to suck up to Caesar.*)

Seleucus: Madam, since you force me to tell the truth—which I would do anyway standing before the great Caesar—I must say yes. There is a great deal that you have not listed.

Cleopatra: You bastard!

Caesar: It's all right, Cleopatra. I'm not going to make you live in poverty.

Cleopatra: Suppose I did set aside a few little things? It was only so that I could give some presents to your wife and sister. (*To Seleucus*) You traitor! Get out!

(*Seleucus hesitates, looking to Caesar for his instructions.*)

Caesar: It's all right, Seleucus. You can leave.

Seleucus: My lord.

(He bows and leaves.)

Caesar: I'm not going to confiscate your wealth, don't worry. And please don't think about killing yourself. I'll be consulting with you in the next few days about your needs and what arrangements to make. I want you to think of me as a friend.—I leave you now.

(He bows slightly.)

Cleopatra: My lord and master.

Caesar (Smiling): No, no, no.

(Caesar and his party leave.)

Cleopatra (To Charmian and Iras): He's lying! Do you hear me? He's lying!—Charmian.

(She whispers to Charmian.)

Charmian: Yes, madam. Whatever you wish.

(Charmian leaves as Dolabella comes in. The suggestion is that he is sneaking back without Caesar's knowledge.)

Dolabella: Madam, I came to tell you—

Cleopatra: Yes?

Dolabella: Caesar is going to Syria soon. You and your children are to be sent on ahead within three days. I thought you should know. It's the only kindness I can do for you.

Cleopatra: Thank you, Dolabella.

Dolabella: Goodbye, madam. May the gods protect you.

(He leaves.)

Cleopatra: Do you hear, Iras? We're going to be put on display. We're going to be a spectacle for the amusement of the crowds.

Iras: My Queen!

Cleopatra: Death is better than such humiliation.

Iras: Yes, madam, it is.

(Charmian returns. She nods solemnly, suggesting that an instruction has been carried out.)

Cleopatra: Ladies, bring me my best clothes. I want to look as beautiful as the first time Antony saw me.—Iras, bring me my crown and the royal symbols.

(Charmian and Iras leave. Then a Guard comes in.)

Guard: Madam, there's a farmer who insists on seeing you. He says he has a basket of figs for you.

Cleopatra: Ah, yes. Let him in.

(The Guard goes out. The Farmer comes in.)

Farmer: Most noble Queen.

Cleopatra: Have you brought—the pretty worm of the Nile?

Farmer: Yes, madam.

Cleopatra: And is its bite fatal—and painless—as I have heard?

Farmer: Almost always fatal, madam. And, yes, almost painless.

Cleopatra: Good. Leave the basket.

(He puts the basket down.)

Farmer: You mustn't handle it, madam. It's a terrible snake.

Cleopatra: Yes, yes. Thank you. You may go now.

Farmer: Yes, madam.

(He leaves. Charmian and Iras return with Cleopatra's robe, crown, and royal symbols.)

Cleopatra: Dress me.

(They dress her.)

Cleopatra: Now kiss your Queen goodbye.—My good Charmian.—My faithful Iras.

(They kiss her. Iras collapses and dies. [The suggestion must be that she dies from sheer emotion, since there is no other possible explanation.])

Charmian: Iras! *(Touching her)* She's dead, madam!

Cleopatra: Can death be so gentle?—Oh, that I could die so gently.—Now she goes to tell Antony that I'm coming.

(Cleopatra kneels and puts her hand in the basket. [In the original play, she takes the snake out and applies it to her breast. The Director may choose to do it that way, but the staging becomes very problematic, and you don't want to botch it at this critical point.])

Cleopatra: Bite—bite—What are you waiting for?

(She reacts to the snake bite and collapses.)

Charmian: My Queen!

(Cleopatra is on her back, looking up, past Charmian. There is a look of astonishment on her face. She clutches Charmian but is looking past her.)

Cleopatra: Charmian—I see—white birds—many white birds—

(She dies. Then some Guards rush in noisily.)

First Guard: What happened to the Queen!

Charmian *(Finger on her lips, and a strange smile on her face)*: Shh!—She sleeps.

First Guard: Oh, no! Caesar is on his way!

(Charmian puts her hand in the basket.)

Charmian: Caesar is always welcome here.

(She reacts to the snake bite.)

First Guard *(Calling)*: Help! There's trouble here!

Second Guard: I'll get Dolabella.

(The Second Guard goes out quickly.)

First Guard: What has the Queen done?

Charmian *(Dying)*: The Queen—has done—the best thing—she has ever done—

(Charmian dies. Dolabella rushes in with the Second Guard.)

Dolabella: What happened?

First Guard: They're all dead.

(Caesar and his entourage come in.)

Caesar: What's going on?—Oh! *(Reacting to the sight of the bodies)*

Dolabella: You were right, my lord.

Caesar: I had a bad feeling. She wasn't going to give me the satisfaction of showing her off.—But I don't see any blood. How did she kill herself?

Dolabella *(To the First Guard)*: Who was the last person to see her?

First Guard: Just a farmer. He brought her that basket of figs.

(Caesar bends closer to Cleopatra's body.)

Caesar: There's a mark on her wrist. *(He looks at Charmian's body.)* And her lady's wrist, too. *(He stands up.)* Snake! *(He looks around.)*

(Dolabella kicks the basket over.)

Dolabella: It's not there. *(He looks at the floor and then points.)* It's gone out that way.

Caesar: She was braver than I gave her credit for.—She and Antony were well-suited to each other after all. And now they're together.

Dolabella: Shall we give them a decent burial, my lord?

Caesar: More than decent. We'll give them a funeral fit for kings and queens and bury them side by side. The whole army will attend. We'll do it the right way.—We'll do it the Roman way.

(Scene ends without an exit.)

END

Posted on April 12, 2011 by Crad Kilodney, Toronto, Canada.

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